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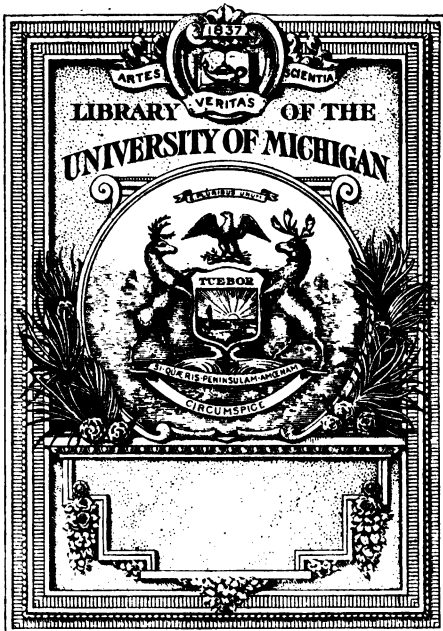
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THE GIFT OF
Mass. Hist. Society

AN

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE FUNERAL OF

REV. WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, D. D.

IN THE FEDERAL STREET MEETING-HOUSE,

OCTOBER 7, 1842.

By EZRA S. GANNETT.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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At a meeting of the Proprietors of the Meeting-house in Federal Street, in the city of Boston, the following resolutions were offered by Hon. JUDGE DAVIS, and unanimously adopted:—

Resolved, That we have heard with profound grief the intelligence of the death of our revered and beloved pastor and friend, the Rev. WILLIAM E. CHANNING, D. D., with whom we have been so long and so happily connected, and whose invaluable moral and religious teachings we have so long enjoyed.

Resolved, That we dwell with deep sensibility upon the life and services of this faithful servant of God, now brought to a close on earth; upon the energy, unbroken to the last, with which, notwithstanding much physical infirmity, he labored in the discharge of the trust assigned to him by his great Taskmaster in Heaven; upon his loyalty to duty, his sympathy with humanity, his religious faith, the eminent Christian graces which adorned his character, and the persuasive power with which he preached the gospel of Christ: and we feel a profound sense of gratitude for the peculiar privileges which we have so long had, in hearing his voice, receiving his instructions, and in being guided, warmed and animated by his discourses and his life.

Resolved, That as members of this community, we mourn the vanishing from earth of a great moral and intellectual light, in the death of one who has uniformly devoted great powers to good ends, whose bosom glowed with love for the whole human family, who has been the eloquent and fearless advocate of truth, liberty and humanity, whose admirable writings have had no other object than the highest good of mankind, who has done so much to make men wiser, happier and better, and who has commended the religion of Christ to so many hearts and minds by his profound and beautiful expositions of its doctrines and spirit.

Resolved, That we deeply sympathize with the family of our departed friend in their irreparable loss, and earnestly pray that the consolations of that religion, of which he was so faithful a minister, may be extended to them in proportion to the magnitude of their bereavement.

Resolved, That the Standing Committee of the Proprietors, the Deacons of the Church, and the Clerk and Treasurer be a committee to make arrangements for a public funeral and appropriate services in the church, provided it be agreeable to the family of the deceased.

Resolved, That Hon. Judge Davis, Mr. Rollins and the Clerk be a committee to present a copy of the foregoing resolutions to the family of the late Dr. Channing, and that the Clerk also transmit a copy to Rev. Mr. Gannett.

A true copy.

Attest,

GEO. S. HILLARD, *Proprietors' Clerk.*

BOSTON, OCT. 5, 1842.

Services at the Funeral

OF

REV. WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, D. D.

OCTOBER 7, 1842.

AN THEM.

I heard a voice from heaven,
Saying unto me,
Write, from henceforth blessed are the dead
Who die in the Lord.
Even so, saith the Spirit,
For they rest from their labors.

READING OF THE SCRIPTURES,

BY REV. MR. LOTHROP.

PRAYER,

BY REV. DR. PARKMAN.

HYMN.

Go to the grave in all thy glorious prime,
In full activity of zeal and power ;
A Christian cannot die before his time,
The Lord's appointment is the servant's hour.

Go to the grave, for there thy Saviour lay
In death's embraces, ere he rose on high ;
And all the ransomed by that narrow way
Pass to eternal life beyond the sky.

Go to the grave : no, take thy seat above ;
Be thy pure spirit present with the Lord,
Where thou, for faith and hope, hast perfect love,
And open vision for the written word.

ADDRESS,

BY REV. MR. GANNETT.

PRAYER,

BY REV. MR. YOUNG.

HYMN.

Calm on the bosom of thy God,
Dear spirit, rest thee now !
E'en while with us thy footsteps trod,
His seal was on thy brow.

Dust, to its narrow house beneath !
Soul, to its place on high !
They that have seen thy look in death
No more may fear to die.

BENEDICTION.

NOTICE.

THIS Address is printed as it was delivered, not because it is worthy of the character to which it is devoted, or even approaches a complete delineation of that character; but because I could never make it worthy or complete, and the attempt to enlarge it might only render its defects more manifest. As it now stands, it expresses what alone it was meant to convey — the recollections which sprang up in my mind, after the first sensation of bereavement had subsided, of one whom I honored not less, because I may have loved him more, than others who beheld him at a greater distance. To speak of him in any other than the words of simple truth seemed to me like profanation of a sacred theme. He needs no eulogy whose life was full of truth. To his memory let me dedicate these pages.

E. S. G.



A D D R E S S .

“WHOSOEVER liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” — Such were the words of Jesus, when talking with one whose heart was well-nigh broken by recent and heavy affliction. She had addressed him in terms of reproach, for his absence from the death-bed of his friend. He spoke to her of the life before which death is powerless, and of the faith which composes the mind under bereavement. His discourse was with her, but his language assumed that form of expression which gave it a prophetic meaning for all future ages. And now, unseen, but present in the influences of his Gospel within this house, — as he was present, though unseen, in the same influences within the apartment where the spirit unbound its fellowship with that lifeless frame, — I hear him say, “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” Beneath such a voice I feel the emotions of grief which convulse the bosom subside into the calmness of a faith, which pierces the visible changes of death and seizes on the reality of an immortal life.

Our friend was one in whom the declaration of the Saviour found its fulfilment. And great as is our sorrow at his departure from us, the indulgence of this sorrow is not the way to express the influence which he had acquired over our hearts. I dare not fix your thoughts upon the magnitude of our loss; for this would betray a forgetfulness of the lessons which he labored to communicate, and so far would dishonor his sacred memory. Our sense of loss, besides, is too deep for words. I could utter it but in broken expressions; you could respond but in choking sighs. To those who filled the circle of his domestic love, may the consolations which God giveth them who seek the shelter of his grace be abundantly granted. To those who, beyond that circle, yet enjoyed the intimacy which bound his to kindred minds, who travelled with him the paths of high thought and holy sentiment and generous endeavor, the recollection of past privilege will carry an antidote to its own infliction of pain. But not on them alone; nor on the members of the Christian society into whose house of prayer his form, that has so often seemed here to borrow from the inward nature a portion of its spiritual energy, has now been brought insensible, yet beautiful, as if the tranquillity of holy thought still moulded that brow; nor on this congregation, from all the departments of social life though it have been gathered; but upon this whole community, upon our land through its vast extent, upon the world, and upon future generations, has this loss fallen. Wherever the wants of humanity are felt, or its interests need or shall hereafter need to be expounded by the clear understanding or advocated by the eloquent tongue, wherever freedom might seek to

bestow its blessings, or religion to diffuse its power, or Christianity to offer its counsel and sympathy, there will his removal, whose days, if they had been prolonged, would have been devoted, (as they were ever given whilst he lived among us,) to the service of freedom, of religion, of Christianity, bring an actual diminution of the influences that might have been made to bear on the regeneration or the advancement of mankind. It is not this city, nor New England alone, that must feel his death as an immeasurable calamity. Our republic has lost one of its most enlightened and faithful citizens; strong and fearless, yet calm and hopeful, in the defence of justice and the principles of well-ordered liberty. Across the ocean thousands of hearts will lament, as for one whom they hailed as an instructor, or a fellow-laborer. The cause of truth and virtue and piety has lost him who stood foremost in vindicating its claims upon man and society. The church of Christ has lost a teacher whose words sank into men's hearts with a power to convince and persuade, whose soul burned with a desire to unfold the revelations of Divine love which neither changeful circumstances nor personal infirmity could abate, and whose character reflected from its equal surface, resting on the deep principles of its formation, the truths which his lips commended. The age has lost one of its brightest lights, the world one of its true benefactors. And all this we feel, and are made to feel, as we observe these funeral rites. Still on this we must not dwell. Other thoughts should lift our minds into a serener atmosphere than that of grief. It is not on death that we should meditate, when the spectacle before us is not so much of death as of life.

As I think of him whose image now fills the plane of mental vision, I see him not as insensible, inactive, as separated from the highest interests of human consciousness and action. He rises before me as one whose existence is informed and immortalized by the sentiment which was announced by the Prince of life — “whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” His life on earth was a part of his immortal life; and death has only helped to make more distinct the life that was in him, and to show how indestructible were its elements. On that imperishable life, which manifested itself through the perishable connexions of the flesh, it becomes us to ponder; that while we trace its character, we may at once pay the only worthy tribute of gratitude for the impression he made on us, and may comfort, strengthen, and instruct ourselves.

Although of that life I cannot speak as I ought or would, my connexion with this place makes it proper for me to direct your thoughts, if possible, towards a right use of our bereavement. That use is to be found in a quickened sensibility to the great purposes for which he lived, and these purposes can be learned only through an attempt to understand his life — the life which made him what he was on earth, and what he now is where our faith only can follow him.

Of his outward life, the existence which is described in dates and facts, a few words will suffice. He was born at Newport, in Rhode Island, on the seventh of April, 1780. (Note 1) Of the influences exerted on his mind through the impressible years of childhood and youth they can judge, who were acquainted, as were many of us, with her whose rare strength of character must

have given to her maternal discipline a power seldom obtained even in this nearest of relations. The tender reverence with which he regarded that mother in subsequent years was a proof, not only of the depth of his affections, but of the strength of the filial sentiment she had inspired. Even in his boyhood he is said to have exhibited the earnest, though cheerful thoughtfulness, and the strict regard to truth, both in word and action, which marked him in later years. After preparation, which was completed at an early age, he entered the college at Cambridge, whence he graduated in 1798, bearing with him the highest honors of the institution, and having distinguished himself by his habits of diligence and his blamelessness of deportment, as well as by the indications of great natural endowment. Upon finishing his collegiate course he accepted an invitation to reside a year with a gentleman in Virginia, as the instructor of his children. He there probably laid the foundation of that feebleness of constitution and liability to disease, which continued through the rest of his life. His mind early selected the ministry as the scene of his future studies and labors, and after his return from the South he pursued the necessary preparation, (2) the result of which was a style of address that at once drew attention to him as a preacher. The pulpit of the society worshipping on this spot being then vacant, he was heard with an interest which induced them to invite him to become their minister. His compliance with their request, as I have been told, resulted in part from the conviction that his state of health would permit him better to carry out his views of ministerial fidelity with a small congregation, as this was, than with one much

larger, with which he might have been connected. (3) The increase of the society was an immediate consequence of his connexion with it, and his health for a short time proved itself sufficient for the demands of his office. But it was not long before the delicacy of his system justified the anxieties, which were never afterwards allowed wholly to subside. He continued, however, in the assiduous discharge of his professional duties; the congregation became numerous, a new house of worship was erected, (4) his usefulness widened, his influence in the community became more extensive and important, the University where he had pursued his academical studies called him to a seat among her instructors, and to a participation in the direction of her affairs, (5) the theological controversy, which ended in the dissolution of that union in which the Congregational churches of this Commonwealth had walked for nearly two centuries, found him ready to use his pen in support of what he considered the doctrines of a rational and scriptural faith, (6) and the interests of religion seemed more and more to lean on his arm, when the necessity of a voyage to Europe for the benefit of his health removed him for a season from this sphere of exertion. (7) He probably derived permanent benefit from this absence, but still there was such an habitual want of vigor in his system, that soon after his return he desired an assistant in his ministry; and a colleague was settled in 1824. From that time he continued to officiate in the pulpit with more or less frequency, as his strength permitted, till 1840, when he requested the society to release him from all obligation of professional service, though he desired to retain the pastoral connexion to-

wards them. As his mind was relieved from the pressure of ministerial engagement, his attention was more and more given to the aspects which society, in its opinions, usages, and institutions, presents to the Christian philanthropist. He was led by his interest in these subjects to communicate to the public, at different times, his thoughts on questions of immediate urgency, involving high moral considerations, and devoted a large part of his time to an examination of the light which Christianity throws upon practical ethics. (8) The summer he always spent in the country, amidst those influences of nature which he esteemed as even more grateful in their effect upon the mind than on the body; and the past season he chose his residence among the mountains that traverse the western section of our State, in whose beautiful seclusion he found a high degree of enjoyment, and a firmer tone of health than he had for a long time possessed. On his journey homeward, by way of Vermont, he was exposed to a temperature unusual at the season, and too severe for him to encounter with impunity; which produced an access of disease, that prevented his proceeding beyond Bennington. Here his illness steadily advanced till it overpowered the vital energy, and what at first were the slight apprehensions of his friends were converted into anxious fears, that only gave place to the sorrows of bereavement. He observed the progress of his disease with the calmness that was habitual with him in every situation, expressed a sense of the Divine love even beyond what he had before felt, manifested that exquisite tenderness of affection which gave such beauty to his private life, spoke earnestly of the truth and worth of Christianity, and its certain prevalence

over the errors and sins of the world ; and thus meeting death, not as one who is taken by surprise, nor as one unprepared for the change it makes in human condition, but as one in whom the religion of Jesus Christ has built up a consciousness of immortal life that cannot be shaken by the decay of the body, he sank away from his connexion with the earth, as the sun, towards which he turned his closing eyes, was disappearing behind the light which it shed upon the surrounding sky, on the evening of that day which is dearest to the Christian heart, the day sacred to the remembrance of him who is "the resurrection and the life." (9)

Within the limits to which the present occasion confines us we cannot even glance at all that belonged to the higher life, which we now proceed to contemplate. The most rapid sketch of the various excellence which was seen in him, of the aims which he pursued, and the services which he rendered to the Church and to society, would occupy much more time than can now be granted for this duty. Hereafter it should be undertaken by some one whose acquaintance and sympathy with the character he may attempt to describe, would enable him to surmount the difficulty of speaking in fit terms of the rare combination of gifts and virtues which was found in Dr. Channing. Let us use the few moments that we may now command, in seizing upon the prominent features of his excellence.

Of his mental constitution less need be said, because, judging as he judged, intellectual endowments are of far less moment than the spiritual energy which is evolved from the soul. Genius indeed he considered a gift from the Creator, for which the world on whose account it is

bestowed, as well as its possessor, should be thankful ; and those powers of mind which flow from "the inspiration of the Almighty" he possessed in an unusual degree. Still they did not constitute his chief claim to respect, nor did they in his case, I conceive, belong to the very highest order of (mere) intellectual consciousness. His mental constitution was not without its defects. His intellectual greatness was more the effect of rigid self-discipline than of even the superior abilities which manifested themselves in his youth. Those patient yet rapid exercises of thought, those clear and stern habits of reflection, those acute powers of analysis, which disentangled the essential from the incidental in whatever came under his study, were the result of diligent training which he imposed upon himself in the earlier stages of his mental growth, and never afterwards relinquished. (10) One property, however, of his original constitution ought not to be overlooked — his love of the beautiful, in nature and in art ; for this was not only an element which responded to every call made upon it, but it gave a delicacy to his conceptions and a polish to his discourse, that added a peculiar charm alike to his conversation and his writings. No one perhaps ever enjoyed God's workmanship in the evanescent forms of beauty that clothe the earth or the skies, more than he ; and few studied with a higher relish or a more accurate taste the productions of human genius. Still his greatness was of the soul rather than of the intellect. He was great, because he lived greatly. Yet it may be doubted whether this fact was recognised as it should have been. Such was the splendor thrown around his name by his intellectual productions, that his moral preëminence, the

spiritual beauty which belonged to him, did not obtain its due appreciation beyond the circle of his nearest friends; although these productions, properly understood, must inspire reverence for the majesty of soul which they disclose, even more than admiration for the brilliancy of genius which shines through them.

His spiritual attainments also were the fruits of his own industry. Self-culture was with him a word of large and authoritative meaning. He early commenced that work which was never suspended—to make himself a perfect man in Christ Jesus. In his youth, as it has been told me, he was of a somewhat impatient temper; but those who knew him only in the period of middle life, find it difficult to believe that he was not naturally of a gentle mood,—so successful was the control which he had established over himself, till it had ceased to be an effort of the will and had become a habit of the heart. With similar fidelity—and may we not say, with equal success—did he labor to bring every propensity and capacity, and even every thought to the obedience of Christ. To the tenderest affections, the gift of nature, he united a sweetness of disposition that made him an object of the most confiding love. (11) There was nothing harsh in his temper, nor artificial in his manners, for they were both formed on the model of the Friend of man. So free was he from effort or display, so true to himself, that a stranger might sometimes impute to him coldness or abstraction; but of his gentleness of spirit they who saw him daily could bear witness, and of his uniform kindness, if there were no others to testify, I could speak through eighteen years of a peculiar connection. Singularly diffident of his own

merits when he assumed the office of a public teacher, the tone of decision with which he afterwards spake arose from his sense of the momentous nature of truth, and not from confidence in himself. The seriousness which often tempered his habitual cheerfulness was the result of meditation on the great themes and responsibilities of life. With the Apostle, he judged that he had "not yet attained nor was already perfect," but ever "pressed on towards the mark of the prize of his high calling." None placed that mark at a higher point, or bent their efforts more strenuously to reach it. Humble and docile, eager to learn and ready to practise whatever might be discovered of God's will, he sought "to fulfil all righteousness," whether in his relations towards God or man. That he was free from imperfection or fault, it would be idle and sinful panegyric to assert. But that he chose perfection as his aim and directed to it his aspirations and efforts, is a truth which must have been felt by all who observed his course.

I have noticed this fidelity of self-culture first among the traits of Dr. Channing's character, not only because it laid the foundation of his other virtues, but because we are apt, when a great mind passes away, to ascribe its superiority to nature rather than to discipline. It was in him, (if it be not always,) the great life which made the great mind. His intellect was clear and comprehensive, because he loved the truth and followed after righteousness. His mind acted forcibly, because it acted freely, without the hindrance of ambition or self-love.

In pursuing this culture of his own nature Dr. Channing vindicated for himself, as he always allowed to others and maintained on their behalf, the rights of intel-

lectual and spiritual liberty with which he held that every man is endowed by the Creator. His devotion to freedom was of the purest and most ardent kind — to the largest and loftiest freedom. Slavery in every form he scorned, abhorred, and exposed. He was the champion of human rights — the rights of free thought and free speech, of self-government and self-improvement. He stood by the Protestant principle of private judgment, and defended it against theological violence. He stood by the charter which God gave to man at his birth, and maintained its validity against usage and worldly interest. In his devotion to this cause he was consistent through his whole life. As different kinds of oppression attracted his notice, he uttered the scorching tones of rebuke and proclaimed the everlasting principles of justice in the ear of prejudice or power. He thought not of personal consequences, he cared not for fame, he was willing to incur reproach or sacrifice friendship, if he might but loosen the chains by which a human being was unrighteously bound, or might weaken the despotism of public opinion. It was a sublime sight, to behold him jeoparding the estimation in which he was held in this community rather than be silent on what he considered the errors and the duties of his countrymen. Whatever may be thought of the soundness of the views which he advanced, no one can refuse his admiration at the spectacle of moral courage, disinterestedness, and loyalty to solemn convictions which was presented by the course which he took. So jealous of any interference with the liberty of thought was this great assertor of the rights of man, that he preferred a latitude of speculation in which might originate serious error, to even a tacit encouragement of the far

greater evil of subjection to an authority thrusting itself between the mind and its Author. And so fearful was he of being himself "entangled with the yoke of bondage," that he avoided connection with many of the philanthropic associations of the day; and with the increase of his years, while his bosom glowed with an increasing interest in the cause of truth, his disinclination to act with any party in church or state, with any sect in theology or morals, became more and more decisive. He would neither follow, nor lead a party. It was his office, as he interpreted the guidance of the spirit within him, to unfold to his fellow-men the ideas with which his own secret life was occupied. He was accustomed to style them "*great truths*," for, through the distinctness of his insight, they assumed to his mind a magnitude more nearly approaching their real importance than was apprehended by men of inferior powers of intellectual and moral conception. Liberty, progress, virtue — to these and kindred ideas did he devote his energies of thought, and upon them did he expend his resources of communication. To lead a single mind, and much more, to bring society to embrace these truths in their genuine character, was a task which he thought worthy of all the strength he had to bestow. But in his fidelity to this work he would not suffer himself to be trammelled by any of the restraints which policy, or even too intimate coöperation with others, might have cast around him. From first to last his language and his conduct in regard to the liberty, which is man's birthright, were marked by the strictest consistency.

But deeper even than his love of liberty was the sentiment of religion. If ever one lived who might be

pronounced the child rather than the servant of religion, one of whom it might be said in the words of the Christian Apostle, that his "life was hid with Christ in God," it was he of whose life we are speaking. His religion pervaded and filled his being, it was the strength and joy of his soul. So devoid was he of austerity or artificial solemnity, such a calm simplicity ran through his whole life, that the depth of religious emotion which lay within his heart may not have been known to most observers. In him religion wrought with less opposition from appetite or self-will than she must generally encounter in her endeavors to form the soul into the likeness of the Divine image, and in him therefore was seen that "beauty of holiness," which shone through the habits of his daily life like the sunlight through the clouds which it fills with radiance. Dr. Channing's piety was founded on the Christian revelation of "the Father." It was the piety of profound reverence tempered by filial love. The goodness of God was reflected upon his heart from every thing in the creation. In the Divine Providence he placed a trust so grateful, patient, and entire, that it seemed like a child's confidence in a parent's care, — and such it was. His conceptions of the Divine government were singularly *real*, and they gave him a composure of spirit and a steadfastness of hope that have seldom been equalled. Who that heard him discourse from the text, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice," however dull their own religious sensibility, could fail to perceive the strength of his conviction of the rectitude and beneficence which superintend the affairs of the universe? His faith had a strength and constancy, a liveliness of conception, a power of realization, which I

want words to describe. It is said in the Scripture that "the just shall live by faith," and the meaning of this declaration was exhibited in him. The devotion which distinguished him beneath the parental roof grew, amidst the influences of life and under the study of the Scriptures, into a frame of mind that could have been nothing less than a foretaste of the communion which is enjoyed by them who have entered the Divine presence above. To his view the "exceeding sinfulness" of sin was manifest from its character of opposition or insensibility to a God, who revealed himself, in his laws and judgments not less than in his gifts, as Love. Whatever darkened or confused the image of the Father as set before man in the Gospel, he regarded with the utmost grief and was most anxious to remove. He wished that others might see, with him, the Infinite Father seated on the throne of the universe. With this tender and reverential piety he united a conscientiousness that was worthy to be its companion. I never saw another man in whom the principle of rectitude was so strong and wakeful. It was this alone that ever made me afraid of him, but I did stand in fear of that judgment which would never let partiality, nor compassion even, blind him to any compromise of personal integrity. Always ready to be as lenient as the truth would permit, his discernment of moral obliquity was too keen and the impression it made on him too deep to allow any one who wished to retain his esteem to deviate from the line of right. His religious character, clinging thus on the one side and the other to piety and rectitude, both of which, while their basis is in human nature, lift their summits into heaven, had at once a stability and an elevation that are rarely witnessed.

Central among his religious convictions was his faith in Christianity. To him the Christian religion was God's "unspeakable gift." It was his study and his delight; the occasion of an unutterable gratitude and an unquenchable hope. Jesus was the messenger and the revelation of the Father, the manifestation and pledge of the Divine love to man. On this theme, oh! how eloquently would he speak; with the eloquence of faith, and feeling, and experience. Christianity, in his estimation, was not so much stamped as impregnated with divinity. Its revelations he welcomed, its commandments he received, its promises he cherished. On the Christian religion he built all his hopes for the individual and for the race. With him it was at once the bow of promise and the instrument of regeneration. The character of Christ he studied with intense interest. He there enlarged and rectified his knowledge of God; he there learned the destiny of man. Jesus glorified through suffering, a Conqueror and a Saviour through submission to death, was a theme which kindled his soul into Apostolic rapture. From the cross he saw beams of mercy descending upon a dark and sinful world. How have our hearts, my brethren, thrilled as his simple words of faith and love, uttered over the memorials of our Lord's passion, have carried us to Calvary, and from Calvary to heaven. The admiration, the gratitude, the confidence which he felt towards Christ, gave such earnestness to his tones that no one could for the time resist their persuasion. To exhibit the character of Jesus and bring men into sympathy with it, to unfold the claims of his Gospel, as they are seen in its origin and its contents, to awaken in others a perception of the infinite worth of

such a religion and an experience of its Divine power, was the object nearest his heart. This was the end of his ministry; to this he dedicated his life. His faith in the might of Christian truth became stronger with every year of his life, and every month of observation; and this confidence he strove to infuse into other minds. "We need," said he, on the last time on which he spoke in public, and they were among the last words which he wrote, "we need a new faith in what Christianity is to accomplish. We scarcely believe what we see of the triumphs of the cross. This is the most disastrous unbelief of our times." Sustained himself by such a faith he never despaired for the future, nor was discouraged by circumstances of present gloom. While God reigned, and Christianity was on earth, he had hope for man. (12)

He had hope for man, and he had faith in man. This faith in the capabilities and destinies of human nature was perhaps his most conspicuous peculiarity. As a theologian and a preacher, it was unquestionably that which distinguished him. The worth of man, in the sight of God; the worth of man, as the creature of God, and the possessor of faculties on which are imprinted the laws of boundless expansion and endless growth; the worth of man, as attested by the blood of Christ shed for his redemption; the worth of man, as therefore the fact which lies at the foundation of all religious aspiration or effort, teaching or culture, it seemed to be made the special office of this minister of the truth to establish in the belief of his fellow-men. He saw them blind to this, the most important fact concerning themselves. The theology of the Christian world denied this fact, and its religion passed it by without notice. He

felt himself called to become its expounder and defender. Dr. Channing had no love of controversy ; it was foreign from his gentle spirit and his pure tastes. But when he saw the character of the Heavenly Father misunderstood and traduced, and man made the victim as well as the subject of his brother's misrepresentation, he felt himself bound to expose the enormity of such errors. So inveterate was the belief respecting man's native vileness, so did it color all religious teaching and affect religious experience, that he spoke and wrote on this subject with a strength of expression, and a frequency, that may have created an impression that he either exaggerated or overvalued the true doctrine. But was it so ? His doctrine was, that human nature is God's work, and therefore cannot be vile ; that it is the most wonderful work of his hands with which we are acquainted, and therefore should be treated with respect ; that it is made " in the image of God," and therefore is worthy of the highest consideration. He demanded reverence for human nature as it comes from the hands of the Creator, and he said that both justice and piety require us to regard it with serious and grateful reverence. Was he not right ? He did not ask you to reverence human *character*, nor man as he appears with the signatures of his Divine origin effaced and his spiritual being foul with sin ; but human *nature*, as God sends it down from his own creative will, when he makes the newborn being " a living soul." On this doctrine Dr. Channing founded the most solemn expositions of duty, and the most fearful exposures of sin. The dignity of human nature proved the degradation of the sinner. The guilt was shown to be in proportion to the

fall. Others may have indiscreetly handled this doctrine, and not only turned it from its proper uses, but mistaken its character, and so have wrought mischief in the name of truth; but this cannot impair the correctness or the value of the representations, which he so vividly displayed and so forcibly maintained, that they affected men as if a new discovery had flashed upon their minds. It is through the exhibition of his views of human nature, that Dr. Channing will probably hereafter hold his place among the great religious teachers of his age and of posterity. By exposing the prevalent error he reformed the theology of a portion of the Christian Church, and the influence of his opinions, advanced and sustained as they were by his fervid pen, is every day spreading itself to the enfeebling and overthrow of long-established systems.

It was a necessary consequence of the views which he entertained of a nature so noble, whose capacities, however they might be perverted or blunted, were indestructible, that he should take a strong interest in the condition of his fellow-men, and beholding their wretchedness, as they lay the victims of ignorance and captives of sin, should feel the most earnest desire for their instruction and elevation. Hence, of late years, his attention was particularly drawn to the circumstances in the social state which keep humanity from an exercise or a knowledge of its powers. Society, it was his belief, should raise, not depress the individual. Government should help man to be free, not surround him with institutions that cramp his force. The great evil of slavery, said he, is, "that it does all that lies in human power to unmake men." His philanthropy therefore was as broad as the

world, and reached down to the principles of human nature, the elements of character, and the fundamental laws of condition. He loved and honored man, wherever he might be found, for in the lowest he saw one who was his brother and a child of the Universal Father. His sympathy with man was caught from communion with the spirit of Jésus. His heart felt, his tongue pleaded for the fallen, not as outcasts, but as wanderers who should be brought back by kind persuasion into the bosom of the human brotherhood. (13)

Although the infirmities of his physical system compelled him to decline other than occasional participation in duties of a public nature, and in a measure secluded him from society, Dr. Channing had acquired an influence coëxtensive with the civilized world. His celebrity as a preacher accompanied his name wherever it went, although he seldom appeared in any other than his own pulpit. Many of his discourses, however, have been given to the world, and many individuals from distant parts of the country and from foreign lands have listened to the tones of his voice as they filled this house. Those tones had singular sweetness and power. At first they fell so gently on the ear, that they failed to satisfy expectation ; but they soon enchained the attention and touched the heart ; even as the music of a quiet stream, or the passage of the summer's wind through the leaves, if we pause long enough to catch its melody, fastens us to the spot and awakens a thousand tender thoughts. The characteristic of Dr. Channing's style of pulpit address was simplicity — a simplicity so much in harmony with his whole character, so spontaneous an expression indeed of that character, that over them who

knew him it had even more power than over the stranger. Does not memory recall him, my friends, as he appeared in this place, when his fragile form rose before us, and his feeble voice read the hymn which melted into our hearts as it came from his low but impressive utterance? He entered on his discourse as one talking familiarly on themes of serious but pleasant interest. As he proceeded, his voice gained volume and force, his countenance beamed with the illumination of high sentiment, his figure seemed to expand into proportions befitting the majesty of his theme and the grandeur of his thoughts. His diction becomes wonderfully rich, his words are pictures, his illustrations flow on as if he were unburthening a mind so full that it must give out a portion of its wealth. What vividness of intellectual conception, what fervor of chastened feeling, what energy of spiritual life! Hark! there is no sound but that which issues from those lips; the congregation are fixed in motionless attention, tears may be seen on many an upturned face, the persuasion of his language becomes more solemn, the sympathy between him and us more close, the address more direct, the silent response more immediate; till the discourse pauses, and we are restored to a consciousness of our independent existence only by the words, "Let us pray." How often have we been thus affected by his wonderful power over our highest faculties.

It was, however, by his published writings that Dr. Channing exercised an influence, not only throughout our land, but wherever civilization and commerce have opened a way for the entrance of a foreign literature. In Great Britain his name is held in even higher regard

than here, where sectarian and local prejudices prevent a full appreciation of the services which he has rendered to religion and humanity. His works, though various in kind and occasion, are pervaded by a common purpose and spirit. They are all directed to the illustration of Divine truth, of the principles of real excellencé, and of the unchangeable laws of duty. To inspire an understanding and love of man's highest interests is their object. For this alone did he ever take up his pen, and for this, while he lived, he was ready to appear whenever circumstances revealed the peculiar want of the public mind or the apathy of the public heart. As literary productions they are doubtless subject to criticism, which may expose faults of rhetorical structure or verbal expression. But they have the sterling merit of a lucid and easy flow of thought, fervid feeling, and direct as well as lofty aim. Their eloquence, whether it be of the highest sort or not, is undeniable eloquence, for it results from a vivid apprehension of a subject, which it discusses in the glowing language of the heart, and it issues in establishing a sympathy between the writer and the reader. If these be not the tokens of eloquence, where shall they be found ?

His position at the time of his removal from us was as important as it was peculiar. No other man probably had, throughout that large portion of the world in which the English language is spoken, so many minds disposed by their present sympathy with him to welcome whatever opinions he might put forth. His mental independence and moral integrity were guarantees that he would offer nothing which he did not esteem true ; and the nature of the inquiries to which his mind and

heart were devoted was a sufficient security for the continuance of his labors in the fields of moral and religious investigation. On him therefore, more than on any other individual, truth and philanthropy may be said to have placed their dependence. That reliance has been unexpectedly dissolved. The services which he contemplated, or to which he might have been called, will devolve on others. He has been taken away in the midst of usefulness, when his moral force, like his influence, was the largest, and his spiritual life was approaching but had not crossed its meridian. He seems to have left his work unfinished. There was more that he wished to do, and more which he was peculiarly fitted to accomplish. He seems to me to have begun within the last two or three years to understand his relations to the world. He had once belonged, we may say, to a single congregation, then to a particular community; but now his ministry embraced mankind, and he sustained to multitudes, in different regions of the earth, the relations of teacher and friend. Had he lived, his views of usefulness, which had already passed their former limits, would have stretched themselves over the globe, and down the ages of the future; and the accomplishment, we cannot doubt, would have justified this expansion. But all that might have been meditated or executed has now been prevented, as he on whom so great a work rested has vanished from our sight. In view of what might have been effected we involuntarily speak of his premature death. But let us not forget how long and how well he had lived. Nor let us repel from our minds the thought, which it was his great desire to implant there, that God is supreme and righteous. A higher Power

overrules the affairs of men. A Will infinitely wiser than ours, a Will absolutely right, determines the events of Providence. In that Will he, whose loss we should mourn not with an impatient grief, but in a spirit kindred to that which he always cherished, reposed an implicit confidence. "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt," were the words of Him whom our friend set before himself and us as the Pattern to be followed, alike in duty and in trial. To have known one by whose name the age will be marked in history, whose influence will extend to our remote descendants, and in whom was seen a signal illustration of the lessons which he drew from the life of Jesus, is a privilege to be recounted among our choicest blessings. To our narrow vision he may seem to have died when he was most wanted. The world needed his presence, we are ready to think. But God will take care of the world. His protection, his parental interest alone, is indispensable for its welfare. The greatest and best of the children of men must leave the walks of mortal experience, and a cloud appears to those who have leaned on their counsel to come over human affairs. But the light of God's love still shines tranquilly on, and he never "leaves himself without witness" in the labors of those whom he raises up, as one after another quits the appointed scene of usefulness. If it had been necessary for us or for the world that our friend should fill a longer term of years, the prayers which were offered for his restoration would have obtained an answer agreeable to the wishes which they expressed. It did not please the Father so to answer them. Let not us be faithless, but believing and filial.

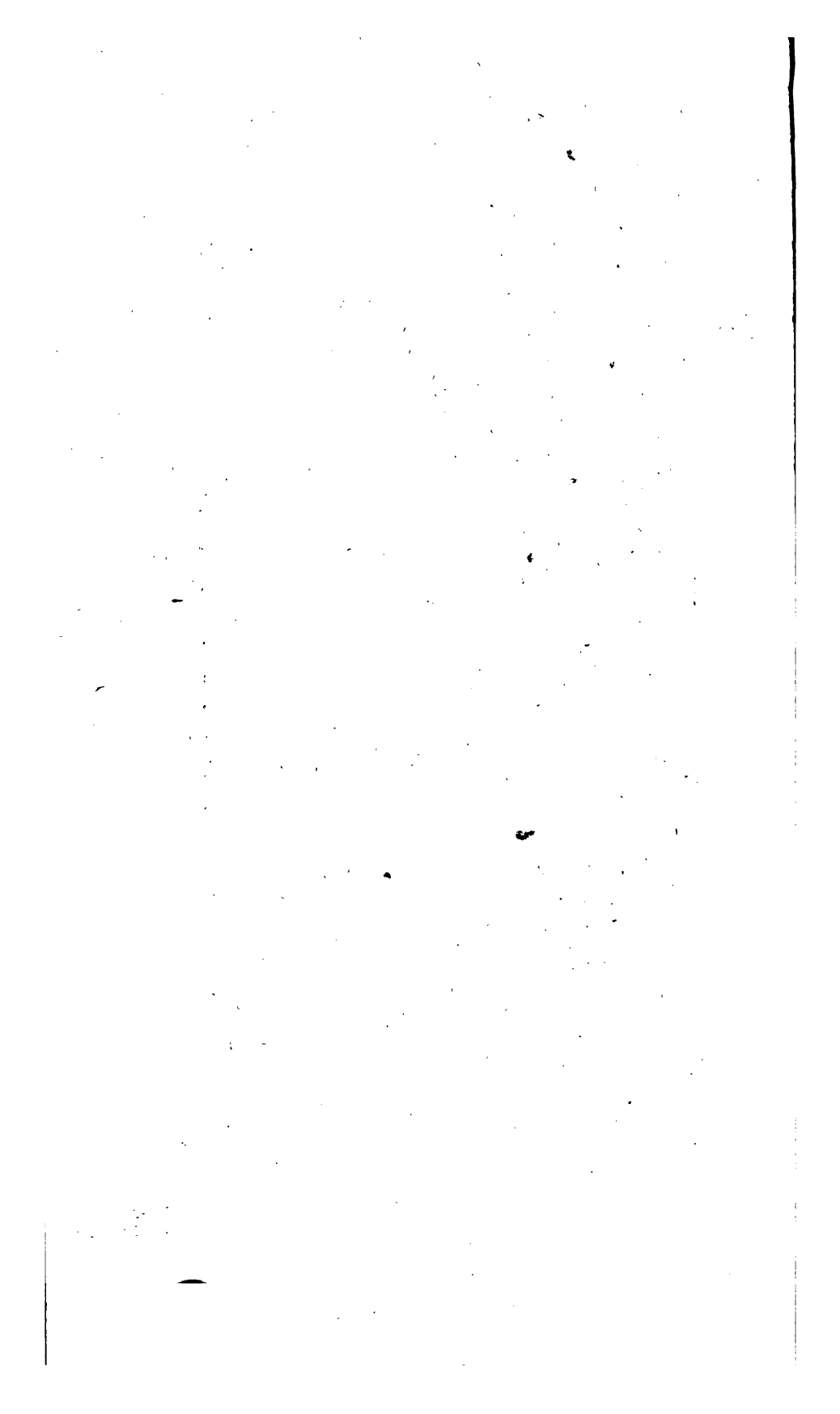
Suddenly and mysteriously, except as faith resolves

all mysteries into a perfect will, and peculiar as are the circumstances under which this light has been withdrawn from our firmament, there is that in the time of its departure which may speak to our hearts of the gracious love of God. The past summer had been one of the happiest that Dr. Channing had ever spent. The valley of the Housatonic had become endeared to him, to use his own words, by his communion with "its beautiful nature, and its generous spirits." Amidst its magnificent scenery, and as if inspired by its free air, he had delivered an address which, even beyond his usual productions, breathes a tone of lofty sentiment and generous hope. Nothing that he had ever written indicates a stronger or more genial exercise of the spirit, a warmer interest in man, a heartier faith in Christianity, or a more fervent confidence in the progress of our race, than this address, which the impulses of his own philanthropy led him to compose a few weeks before his death. If he had foreseen that this was the last time on which he should be permitted to utter his deep convictions, and his earnest wishes, he could not have chosen words better suited to close his ministry on the earth. How beautiful are his concluding ejaculations; the aspirations of hope, and the breathings of devotion. "O, come, thou kingdom of heaven, for which we daily pray! Come, Friend and Saviour of the race, who didst shed thy blood on the cross to reconcile man to man, and earth to Heaven! Come, ye predicted ages of righteousness and love, for which the faithful have so long yearned! Come, Father Almighty, and crown with thine omnipotence the humble strivings of thy children to subvert oppression and wrong, to spread light and freedom, peace and joy,

the truth and spirit of thy Son, through the whole earth ! ”
Do they not seem like the heart's last offering on the altar of humanity ?

Its last ? No. To believe that, would be injustice to him, and denial of Christianity. He still lives, to serve the cause which was dear to his soul. “ Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die,” were the words of Him whom he followed. The life of self-culture and freedom, of piety and righteousness, of faith and love and duty, the life which was expanded in its beautiful symmetry amidst earthly labors and infirmities, the life of the spirit, which was nourished by union with the Father and the Son, the immortal life — this continues beyond the bounds of the mortal existence. He lives in a more blessed society than he has left behind ; in the companionship of glorified saints, in converse with the Saviour whom he loved, and in the near presence of the Holy Father. His toils have been exchanged for the rest that remains for the people of God, the frail garment of the flesh has been laid aside that the vesture of immortality might be put on, and now has he entered those mansions which his Lord had gone before to prepare. There does he still live, but not forgetful of the interests to which his life below was devoted. Still are they present to his remembrance, still cherished in his regard. The welcome of the Master has thrilled his spirit, “ Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ; ” and methinks the response has been, “ Lord, help thou thine own cause on the earth whence thou hast received me into thy joy.” For that cause he still intercedes. Amidst the glories of heaven it is the burthen of his supplication. For that cause his

influence still abides among men. He pleads with us on its behalf through thoughts that can never perish out of the world's storehouse of truth, and sentiments that can never die out of human hearts. He calls us to serve the Master whom he served, and to follow Christ in the regeneration of the world. He calls us to renounce all low pursuits, and consecrate ourselves to justice and humanity and religion. His voice floats upon the echoes of his past instruction; it comes from the skies where he now dwells. Honored and sainted spirit! we hear thy call. It shall not be heard in vain. Thou shalt draw us from the vanities of sense, and the follies of sin. Thou shalt lead us onward till we meet thee in the abodes of immortal life. We will not say farewell, for still do we inhabit the same universe filled with the Father's love. We will not say farewell, for we are still united by those bonds of faith and sympathy which are the same in heaven as on earth. Teacher and friend of our souls! we wait in hope, till the celestial glories in which thou art rejoicing shall burst upon our disembodied vision, and we behold thee clothed with light among those who surround the throne.



N O T E S .

Note 1. Page 10.

DR. CHANNING'S father was William Channing, Esq., an eminent lawyer of Newport, who died in the midst of his vigor and at the height of his professional success, when his son William was in his fourteenth year. His mother was a daughter of William Ellery, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. She died in Boston in 1834. His father's character doubtless exerted an influence on the forming mind of the son, but the nearer intimacy which in his childhood must have existed between him and his mother, and the long period through which she remained the sole possessor of his filial regard gave her a peculiar power over his character. The impression which his youth made upon the other members of his family is still very distinct. He is said to have been even then "singularly pure, devout, earnest, and aspiring, leading his friends to anticipate the full beauty of his matured character." During his college life he resided in the family of his uncle, Hon. Francis Dana.

2. Page 11.

Mr. Channing pursued his studies for the ministry, partly with his uncle, Rev. Henry Channing of New London, Conn. and partly at Cambridge. In Virginia his mind was directed towards the work on which he afterwards entered, and while residing in Mr. Randolph's family, (David Meade Randolph, of Richmond,) he was a diligent student as well as constant reader of the Scriptures.

3. Page 12.

Mr. Channing received an invitation to settle over the Church and Society in Brattle Square at the same time with that from the Federal Street Church. His preference of the latter place was determined "partly by considerations of health and partly by diffidence;" his humility producing a distrust of his own fitness for the office of a Christian minister that for a time was painfully oppressive, and finally led him, in connexion with his health, to choose the less conspicuous and important of the situations offered him.

His ordination took place on the 1st of June, 1803. An old copy of the *Columbian Centinel* contains the following notice. "ORDINATION. Yesterday was ordained to the pastoral care of the Church in Federal Street, the Rev. WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING. The Rev. Mr. *Holmes* introduced the solemnity with prayer; Professor *Tappan* delivered the sermon from Ephes. iii. 8, 9; the Rev. Dr. *Osgood* made the ordaining prayer; the Rev. *Henry Channing* gave the Charge; the Rev. Mr. *Tuckerman* expressed the Fellowship of the Church, [churches,] and the Rev. Dr. *Eckley* made the concluding prayer. The ceremonial was conducted, and the services performed, with a solemnity and fervor, suited to the occasion."

His preaching after his settlement was marked, it is said, by a peculiar solemnity of thought and address. Having no occasion to meddle with disputed questions of theology, he handled the great themes of the Gospel with a force that has left an indelible impression of his discourses upon the minds of those who still remain to speak of that period of his ministry.

4. Page 12.

The meetinghouse occupied by the Society at the time of Mr. Channing's settlement was a wooden building, plain in its appearance and of small dimensions. The present house was erected in 1809, and was dedicated on the 23d of November of that year.

5. Page 12.

Mr. Channing was appointed Dexter Lecturer on Biblical Criticism in Harvard University in 1812, but his health did not allow him to

prepare a course of lectures, and he resigned the appointment the next year. In 1813 he was elected a member of the Corporation, at which Board he retained a seat till 1826. The University conferred on him the honorary degree of D. D. in 1820.

6. Page 12.

Dr. Channing first appeared as a controversial writer in 1815, when he addressed his Letter to Rev. S. C. Thacher, "on the aspersions, contained in a late number of the Panoplist, on the ministers of Boston and the vicinity." This led to a public correspondence between him and Rev. Dr. Worcester, of Salem. In 1819 he preached the sermon at the ordination of Mr. Sparks at Baltimore, which produced the Letters of Professor Stuart and of Doctors Woods and Ware. In this sermon he took that position in behalf of Unitarian Christianity, which he defended in many subsequent discourses, on public occasions and in his own pulpit.

It has been said, that Dr. Channing's religious opinions underwent a change in the course of his ministry. This remark, I apprehend, is suited to give an erroneous impression. It certainly should be accepted with great qualification. Whatever change may have been noticed either by himself or by others, was no more than the natural progress of a mind always seeking the correction or enlargement of its own views through a clearer perception of Divine truth. Dr. Hopkins's view of disinterestedness as the essential element of the Christian character he early embraced, and never relinquished. His sympathies, too, leaned towards what he considered the more serious portion of the Congregational body. But he was never a Trinitarian. He always, I think, regarded Calvinism as a system that misconstrued God, and did injustice to man. He retained through his whole ministry his belief in the preëxistence and superior nature, as well as the Divine character, of Jesus Christ. His views of the atonement may have undergone some modification. But in regard to the evil of sin, the necessity of the Christian revelation for the salvation of man, and the vital importance of spiritual and personal religion, he held the same convictions at every period of his life. The same great truths which he vindicated from misconception and reproach in his preaching of late years, were the foundation of his

religious character in his youth, and shed a celestial peace around his spirit in his last hours. The parental character of God, the divinity of the Gospel, the supremacy of disinterested love as the indwelling principle of the soul, and the blissful immortality of those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek to assimilate themselves to God and Christ, were the doctrines on which, as on an immovable rock, his character and his hope were built.

7. Page 12.

Dr. Channing embarked for Europe in May, 1822, and returned home in August, 1823. During his absence he visited Great Britain, France, Switzerland, and Italy. In the autumn of 1830 he was again compelled by his feeble state of health to leave the United States, and passed the winter of 1830-31 in St. Croix. One or two subsequent winters he spent in Philadelphia.

8. Page 13.

Dr. Channing's writings on Slavery have been read by many who may have never opened a volume of his religious discourses. The articles on Milton, Napoleon, and Fenelon, which appeared in the *Christian Examiner* in the years 1826-29, were the means of rendering his name familiar in England. He had for many years contemplated the execution of one or more works which should unfold, more fully and systematically than was possible in separate discourses, his views of the nature and dignity of man as bearing on his destiny, of the principles by which society should be formed and governed, of the influence which Christianity is meant to exert upon the spiritual and social development of the individual and the race, and of the exhibition which it gives of the Divine character. Within the last year or two his plan had assumed to his own mind a more distinct outline, and he had written much which he might have incorporated into the Treatise to the completion of which he would doubtless have devoted himself more exclusively, if his life had been prolonged. How far the manuscripts which he left are in a state to permit their publication, it is impossible now to say.

9. Page 14.

Dr. Channing's illness extended over twenty-six days. As is usual in cases of autumnal fever, the action of the brain was increased, and the mind was crowded with subjects and images, which at times occasioned him distress, as depriving him of that control over his thoughts which in health and under previous attacks of disease he habitually exercised. The nature of his disease also made it necessary to avoid the excitement of the pulse inevitable upon conversation, and he therefore, as well as those about him, abstained from long-continued discourse. Still he said much that can never be forgotten, and the beautiful serenity, the lively affection, and the perfect trust which he exhibited, made the apartment in which he lay waiting for death a place of holy instruction and peaceful sympathies. He expressed a wish to die at home, but yielded himself wholly to the Divine will. His bodily suffering was at no time extreme. Towards the close of the disease there was an oppression on the chest, and he sank rapidly. The last day of his life was more free from pain or physical uneasiness than those which immediately preceded it. He died at half past five o'clock on Sunday afternoon, October 2. So quietly did his spirit pass away, that they who stood around his bed knew not when the last breath was drawn; and then they were long held to the spot by the more than living beauty which rested upon the motionless features.

10. Page 15.

Dr. Channing always seemed to me more of a thinker than a reader. In his earlier life he was probably a more diligent student of books than of late years, when the pressure of bodily infirmity and the interruptions to which he was continually liable from company prevented his devoting many hours in a day to study. I have often been struck, however, with the ease with which he apprehended the important points in a book which was read to him. He seemed at once to lay hold on the writer's train of thought, and to discover what was true and valuable in it. His mode of examining a subject was suited to secure the utmost fairness in the result. It was his practice to collect and consider the objections to the view which his own mind was disposed to adopt, before proceeding to the arguments

in its favor. Hence, often, in his sermons he would seem to bestow a disproportionate attention upon the difficulties that might be thought to embarrass the truth he presented. The habit of steadfast thought, which was so marked a trait in his mental character when I knew him, must have been formed at the commencement of his intellectual life. This peculiarity has been so well described by one who knew him intimately, that I have sought permission to copy a passage from a sermon delivered after his death by Rev. C. A. Bartol. "That which seems to me to have been his peculiar and predominating mental trait and habit was meditation, for whose joys he has told me he readily resigned to others all wordly satisfactions. Early begun, ever continued, and fixed severely on the things of the spirit, I imagine this habit to have been the chief source both of his intellectual and moral greatness. Though his knowledge was large and choice, he was not, I think, distinctively an investigator of history or a reader of books. Neither was he characteristically a profound metaphysician, or an eager observer of the actual world. But his life was one long act of contemplation." It was, doubtless, through this power of concentrating his mind on the subject which engaged his notice, that he was able to speak of the vices of mankind, as if he had himself mingled in the scenes of sinful indulgence. It was startling to hear him, who lived so far away from the evil courses of the corrupt, describe their character and the wretchedness to which they lead with the vividness of personal experience. Hence too he derived that energy and freshness of expression which distinguish his writings, and to which I was still more sensible as I listened to his preaching. The familiar truths of religion seemed to acquire from his pen a brightness and magnitude which we had not ascribed to them before. Whatever defects the theologian or the critic may think he discovers in Dr. Channing's writings, no one can deny the wonderful suitability of the language to make the idea, which he wished to convey, strike with effect upon the reader.

11. Page 16.

I have been reminded, by a friend, of Dr. Channing's respect for the female character, and his estimation of the maternal influence, which many will remember his expressing in the pulpit in the touch-

ing language of a heart alive to all delicate sensibilities. His own excellence was of that pure and generous kind which meets with kindred feeling all that is noble and lovely in the female mind. Among his intimate friends therefore he counted many cultivated and Christian women.

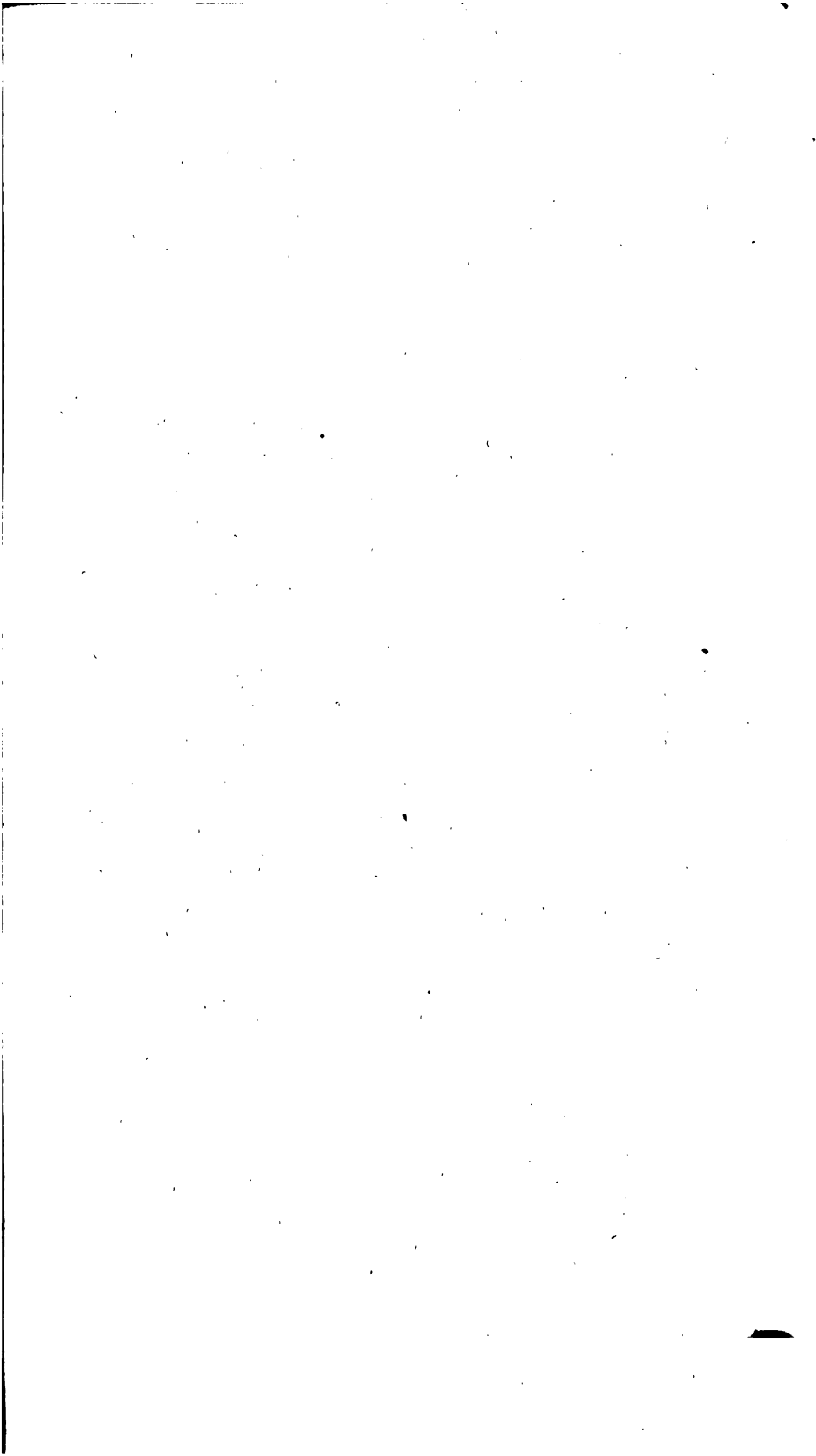
12. Page 23.

Dr. Channing's interest in the subject of Peace was one of the fruits of his faith in Christianity. War he regarded as hostile to the spirit of our religion, and the false associations which are connected with the soldier's person and life he labored to dissipate. None have spoken on this subject more plainly or more earnestly, and few have spoken with more effect.

13. Page 26.

I cannot refrain from making another extract from the discourse just quoted, in reference to a trait which, I believe, was noticed by many who came near him, and which showed at once his personal humility and his regard for others. "In mutual communication he seemed even less ambitious to express his own sentiments than to obtain those of others. Young men have been oppressed by his almost deferential waiting for their opinions. His fond celebration of the dignity of human nature was not a matter of mere words or beautiful theory; for no man ever paid more respect to other's minds in every practical way of listening to and fairly considering their views."







A

S E R M O N

DELIVERED IN THE

FEDERAL STREET MEETING-HOUSE, IN BOSTON,

OCTOBER 9, 1842,

THE SUNDAY AFTER THE DEATH OF

REV. WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, D. D.

By EZRA S. GANNETT.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BOSTON:
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1842.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY FREEMAN AND HOLLES,
WASHINGTON STREET.

S E R M O N .

ROMANS XIV. 7.

NO MAN LIVETH TO HIMSELF.

WHEN we left this place, as the remains of him whom we honored and loved were borne to their repose in the bosom of their mother earth, and his spirit we had followed with the eye of faith to the mansions of the Father's house, we had not finished the work to which our grief and our affection alike prompted us. That was to be pursued through future days, so long as memory could recall his counsels or imitation copy his virtues. The work of honoring the dead is never finished. Those funeral rites were but the commencement of the tribute which we should pay to his character and services, imprinted as they are on our hearts, and registered among the influences for the faithful use of which we are accountable. His life must still be made fruitful of instruction and benefit to our souls ; for whilst he was with us, it was his endeavor to express the spirit as well as the letter of the Apostle's declaration, "None of us liveth unto himself," and we must not prevent the words which

the Apostle added from having in their application to him the largest possible significance, "No man dieth to himself."

The death of our pastor and friend, though it was but an event in the endless life of which he was made an heir by the Creator at his birth, is an event which teaches its own lessons, that should not be disregarded. They are the familiar lessons which always come to our hearts through bereavement, but they derive peculiar force from the eminence and extensive relations of him who has been taken from us. We are all bereaved. It is not a family, but a congregation which mourns; nor a congregation alone, but all who associated his name with the well-being of man. When Truth and Right, Freedom, Justice and Religion acknowledge the loss of one, whose service on their behalf was measured only by his strength, and whose voice commanded the attention of men of every class and every denomination, all who love truth and right feel a personal bereavement, all who are serving the great interests of humanity confess the removal of a fellow-laborer, by whose counsel they were guided or by whose example they were cheered. As partakers in this wide-spread bereavement we have endeavored to collect some part of the instruction which was afforded by his life, and in considering which we may find support under the sense of loss which we share with multitudes. We meet to-day as members of a Christian society, towards whom he sustained a peculiar relation, and by whom therefore his death is contemplated with feelings of peculiar solemnity. His death contains instruction which we must not overlook, but by studying which we shall enlarge his influence over us, so that he shall have both lived and died for our good.

He is numbered with the departed — the dead, as we style them, who no longer take part in the affairs of earth, nor enjoy the privileges that are connected with discipline and duty here. Death has removed him. There is solemn as well as sad meaning in the words. An admonition comes always from the new-made grave, warning us to be also ready. But in each case it comes to some hearts with special power, and now does it seem to address *us* with an unusual emphasis. He is among the dead, who but one month since was among the living, in full possession of every faculty, and in more than common enjoyment of life. What if his frame bore marks of extreme delicacy, and his health was accounted so precarious that it could not be trusted to the ordinary exposures of labor or pleasure? He had long worn this same aspect of frailty, even ever since most of us had known him, and we had become so accustomed to think of him as a man of feeble health, that we had almost learned to regard him as one whose life might be prolonged by care through an indefinite period. His feebleness had become the occasion of our security. At least I seemed to feel a greater confidence respecting his continuance among us than I felt in regard to men of stronger physical constitution. His usefulness too was so great, that we fell into the common error of believing that what was most needed, would be last taken. And our love led us to put at the farthest possible point in the future, or to refuse to anticipate, the event which we dreaded to contemplate. Yet now it has come; now, when we least of all thought of its approach; now, when we had just heard of the unwonted vigor which he displayed, and the promise he gave of encountering successfully the

severities of the winter ; now, when he had just furnished proof of that unforced energy of mind, which betokens a body free from disease ; now, when his influence was the widest, and his usefulness the greatest. What a lesson of mortality is here exhibited ! What an example of the truth, that it is appointed unto man to die, and of the equal truth, that no one knoweth the time of his departure. All that affection could do to check the progress of disease was done by the devoted love that waited at his bedside ; medical skill tried its utmost to conquer the malady which with steady increase baffled the physician's art ; prayers were offered at many altars, of the heart and of the domestic and the public sanctuary, for his recovery. Yet in a single month, in less even than one month, his eyes were closed, his lips sealed by the hand of death. If with such a monition we forget our frailty, great must be our folly, great will be our sin.

He *died*, as said the messenger who brought us the intelligence of his removal. And yet how hard, nay, how impossible was it to believe, that he was not still the conscious possessor of all those wonderful powers which we observed in him while among us. The conviction of his immortality sprang up in our hearts with the announcement of his death. Why ? Not because reason led us through many steps of inference to the conclusion, that he must have survived the appearances of dissolution, nor because at the moment we drew from our Christian faith a solution of the mystery that hung around his lifeless form ; but because we felt — it was an instantaneous and an irresistible feeling — that he had only gone away from us, that that glorious mind, that being with whom we had held a sort of reverential communion, had not

perished, that he had but exchanged the habitation of the flesh for another dwelling-place. And when we undertook to justify this feeling, we found it had sufficient justification in the evidence he had given of intellectual and moral energies that *ought* not to perish, and of a character that *could* not have been broken off and thrown away as a worthless thing. It was impossible, that the faculties in whose exercise we had delighted as the sources of so much instruction, and the virtues which we had just seen expanded in a beauty which we could not call by any other name than spiritual, that they had been blasted and annihilated! It was impossible to believe, that all which made him what he was to our admiration and love had been reduced to nothing! 'If there be a God, that soul still lives,' was the involuntary thought which drove skepticism away from the presence of the dead. So strongly do the wise and good proclaim their own immortality. So does death contradict itself, by uttering in the inward ear the very opposite of that which it presents to the outward sense. So clear are the intimations of man's destiny, written upon his nature, and only made more legible by his growth.

But still, might the mind inquire, are these intimations trustworthy? May not this feeling, involuntary and strong as it is, may it not be a delusion? We need something more than this persuasion of the heart. We cannot *see* the spirit still pursuing its way to perfection. All that we behold is silent, motionless, *dead!* No one of those from whom we have parted has come back to tell us of another state of existence, into which he had entered and we shall follow. How shall we be relieved from this painful doubt, this dreadful uncertainty? Oh!

welcome is the voice of that Teacher who has passed through the grave, and brought tidings of the life beyond. Welcome the voice that can speak with Divine authority, when this alone can meet our want. It is Christianity that satisfies our doubt and turns our feeling into faith—such faith as is but another name for knowledge. In spite of the overwhelming improbability that the wise and good should perish, it is in their case that we most anxiously seek for an assurance that excludes all hesitation of belief. It is as the images of those whom we have most honored rise before us in the freshness of recollection, that Christianity is recognised as the only source of a confidence which cannot be disappointed. Firmer as my persuasion grew, with every moment's study of those placid features, that the light which once shone through the darkened eye was still shining elsewhere, — and never did this persuasion seem to me so much like a message borne into my soul from the other world, — I was thankful, as I came back to the circumstances around me, that I could lean on the sure word of revelation in the Gospel; that word which speaks not only of immortality, but of heaven; which tells us, not only that the dead live, but how they live. Those blessed disclosures of the society into which they have entered, and of the joys of which they who have “died in the Lord” shall be partakers together with him, those declarations from which we derive so much comfort, and those hopes from which we gather so much strength, those testimonies of grace which we need at the death-bed and the grave — these we owe to the Gospel. And for them how can we express a gratitude that shall be commensurate with their value.

With all the light, however, which feeling and faith throw over the departure of those who have proved themselves worthy of our highest admiration, the circumstances of their departure often present just that case of apparent disregard of human necessities which puts our trust in Providence to the severest test. We see the righteous taken away in their righteousness when their example was most needed, and the eminent taken away from their influence when it was yielding the largest results. We see plans interrupted, which, if they could have been carried into effect, would have produced vast benefit to our own and future times. We see an end put to labors that we have deemed indispensable to the success of some cause in which the welfare of multitudes, perhaps of millions, was involved. Such things try our faith in an overruling Providence. They either break it down, or they prove it to be unconquerable. And they are doubtless appointed for this very end. What we call the darkness of Providence is the means which God takes to convince us that we must trust in Him. The lesson which the most sudden or painful or disastrous bereavement teaches, is faith in His care of man and the world. It is not necessary that the good should stay with us, but it is necessary that our hearts be "stayed on God." He never forsakes, forgets, or neglects the world which he has made. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, nor does the brightest star in the firmament suffer eclipse without Him. The least as the greatest, and the greatest as the least, are under his control. "The righteous, and the wise, and their works are in the hand of God," said one who wrote ages before the Christian revelation. We ought not to have less faith than he.

And not only faith, but submission — acquiescence rather, calm and hopeful acquiescence — not the trust alone of a mind convinced, but of a heart self-surrendered — must we have. Oh! how much do we need it, when the sweetest and most profitable intercourse we have enjoyed with our fellow-men is unexpectedly, or even gradually closed. At such times the mere belief in Providence which acknowledges its universal care will not give us peace. We must be able to say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” The heart must have a perfect confidence in the rectitude and goodness of the Supreme Being. We must see his love through disappointment and desolation and death. The greater our loss, the greater must be our trust. The more help from man faileth, the more must we look for help to God. This is the true use, this in part the intended effect of affliction, and in proportion to the weight of the affliction must be the strength of the reliance on Him from whom it comes. Thus does bereavement require, and produce a filial piety, calling forth its exercise by establishing its necessity. What but trust in God, faith in Him as the Father, a submission of the heart to his will, what else can enable us to view our present affliction rightly or bear it calmly? We feel it at this moment to be great beyond what we can express; it probably involves a loss of future counsel and support beyond what we can measure. He who was best able to direct our efforts after perfection, who was most faithful in exposing our errors, and most tender in encouraging our good purposes, whose prayers lifted our souls into the purity of the Father’s presence, and whose discourse quickened our consciences as if a voice had come to us from above,

whose example won us by its loveliness while it animated us by its success, he will no longer instruct or persuade, reprove or cheer us. There is no one to take his place either towards us or towards the land in which we dwell. Do we not feel this? What then can give us patient spirits under this bereavement? Nothing, nothing, but a trust in God like that which he exhibited at all times, in life and in death, and of which the prospect of death enabled him to give the most impressive as well as the final proof.

He maintained his trust in God to the last, unbroken, undimmed, as firm and serene in the closing hour as in the midst of the labors on which his strength was expended. It would be a violation of the respect we owe to the intimacies of kindred to enter that sick chamber, if a voice did not issue thence, calling us to see how the Christian can die. It is the voice of that Providence which gives us the lesson, never to be forgotten. We cross the threshold, and with tearful eyes behold the scene. But tears are not the suitable expression of what we feel, as we stand around him who will soon leave that apartment for heaven. The view of death, as it approaches, neither agitates nor saddens him. Life is pleasant in its many connections, and desirable for the opportunity it would afford to execute long-meditated plans of usefulness that have of late seemed to advance towards their completion. Suddenly did the mandate come which laid his now almost wasted strength upon that bed, far from much that was dear to him of local association and human friendship. But he is as tranquil as if he were enjoying health and home and the prosecution of every cherished purpose. He speaks of the

Father's love, and of the delightful reality, beyond even his usual experience, with which it pressed upon his heart ; of the inappreciable gift of Christianity, and of its Divine power and sure success ; of the kindness which he receives through the offices rendered by those about him ; and of the circumstances under which he is called to leave the world as determined by the Will which knows what is best. It is not in set discourse that he thus reveals the composure of his spirit, but in words more or less continued as his strength allows. There is no effort, and no excitement ; but only the simplicity of truth and the repose of faith. He sleeps, and fragments of prayer are heard stealing from his lips, as if his dreams were of the higher world. He wakes, and asks that a part of the Savior's teaching from the Mount be read to him. He remarks upon the beauty and preciousness and depth of meaning in those verses. The day wears on, as he calmly waits the appointed hour, and when the sun has fallen below the western sky, his countenance, over which the hand of death has passed so lightly that its momentary pressure could not be detected, bears the expression of an unearthly purity and peace. So did he die. The lesson we have read needs no exposition. It speaks to our hearts. God grant it may not speak in vain !

To us, brethren of this Christian society, it must not speak in vain. For, as in his relation to us whom we mourn showed that he did not live to himself, so upon us devolves a sacred obligation to prove that he has not died to himself. In us as a Christian society he felt a strong and affectionate interest. Of late years he had not often conducted our religious services, except at the table

which called us to commemorate the dying love of Jesus ; nor had he been able to maintain that personal intercourse with the members of the congregation generally, which in the earlier part of his ministry he assiduously cultivated. But he was not inattentive nor indifferent to your welfare. It was in his thoughts and upon his heart. Of your visible prosperity he scarcely took note. The number of those who worshipped here was a circumstance to which he paid little regard. It was your spiritual condition for which he cared. He desired your growth in grace, your acquisition of the virtues and your experience of the salvation which belong to the Christian life. He heard with delight of any new proof that you had obtained a clearer perception of the end for which it became you, as men and as Christians, to live, or of any indication of an approach towards that end ; and he deplored the evidences of insensibility to the claims of duty or the requisitions of Christianity that ever came under his notice. He was always interested in what was told him of the religious history of any member of the society. To him I could resort for counsel in the conduct of my ministry, and never fail to find direction or encouragement. Through that remarkable insight into character which he possessed, he could from a few incidents or a brief narration determine what was the actual condition of the soul ; and the steadfastness with which his memory held what had once come within his knowledge enabled him to compare the progress of the individual at different periods with singular accuracy. The earlier stages of his ministry produced upon some of you an impression that can never be effaced, and those whose privilege it has been to receive the consolations

which he could pour into the afflicted heart know what persuasion of comfort dwelt upon his lips. His early ministry was even more effective than his later, because he was then the weekly preacher and the daily companion of his people. The power with which he then riveted his instruction upon the minds whom he drew into communion with himself, was probably equalled in our own city only by the similar example of Buckminster. His preaching, you will remember, when it took its most doctrinal tone, still aimed at the production of sentiment and the formation of character. Its one purpose was to quicken and expand the true life in our souls. He never sought to dazzle by brilliancy or subdue by authority; but to awaken, enlighten, and strengthen the faculties of the higher nature of which every man is the more or less conscious possessor. He had no professional ambition, with which the best ministers are so often tainted, and not seldom in proportion to their success in the pulpit. He would sometimes express with an almost child-like frankness his gratification at learning that a sermon had stirred up any profitable thought in another mind, and he was desirous of learning if he was understood in his attempts to unfold truth; but he never asked nor thought how men regarded him as a preacher. It was usefulness; not fame, to which he looked.

While he endeavored to excite in every one of his people aspirations after a better life, he was desirous that our union in one congregation should be productive of good to ourselves and to others. He favored every attempt to establish a more social and coöperative feeling among us. When he was the sole minister of the congregation, he tried various methods of calling this feeling

into exercise. That they were not attended with more success is easily explained, by a recurrence to his own unequal state of health, the attraction which drew those who were strangers to one another into the society that they might enjoy the privilege of a personal relation to him, and the diffidence which led many to be silent listeners rather than participators in conversation when he was present. After my connexion with the society he encouraged me in every plan I undertook for the same end, welcomed every sign of increasing sympathy or energy among us, and cheered me under every occasion of despondency. How often would my spirit have wholly sunk within me, if he had not animated me to new struggle with the discouragement of my own heart.

It was a favorite idea with him, that a congregation should extend its sympathies beyond itself. He wished that every Christian society should regard itself as a benevolent association. Hence did he promote, many years ago, the establishment of such an association within our congregation, which it was intended should include all the members, and should engage them in seeking out or in supplying channels of philanthropic action. Hence did he regard the institution of the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches with great satisfaction, not only as a mode of benefiting the poor, but as a means of leading our churches towards a perception and discharge of their duty. Nothing, I believe, would have gratified him more, than to have seen our society actively and fervently engaged in doing good. He felt that we should then begin to copy the life of our Master. Cannot we do something — more than we have yet done — towards realizing the resemblance to which he always urged us?

As individuals, we should do more. Ought we not also as a society ?

Brethren, his counsels remain with us to encourage and prompt us to every good work. His influence must not be abridged, but enlarged and strengthened by his removal from us. The impression of his character is now fresh upon our hearts. Let it sink deeper, but lose none of its distinctness with time. We have enjoyed a privilege as rare as it is precious. He was the instructor and benefactor of many minds ; he was *our pastor* and *friend*. He rendered to letters and religion, to this community and to his race invaluable services, of which we in common with others reap the benefit ; but to him our society owes, if not its existence, its stability and prosperity. One bond of union which has united us is dissolved. The magnet which attracted minds to our place of religious service is withdrawn. Still we have a bond, which death has created, in our common remembrance of him. We have recollections and sympathies that belong to us, in which others cannot participate. Let us prize them as a treasure ; for which it was needful for us to pay, alas ! the sad price of his separation from the scenes of an earthly ministry ; but still a treasure, of which we will be both proud and jealous, and for which we will be thankful to him and to God. A sacred responsibility is laid on us, to make a just use of the instructions we have received from his teaching and his life. We do well to honor him with every form of outward respect to his memory. We should be ashamed to meet our fellow-men, if we did not. But there is a higher honor which we must pay him — more worthy of *his* character — more expressive of *our* appreciation of the services

which he has rendered. We must honor him by trying to live as he lived, for lofty ends, and with an eye fixed upon man's spiritual destiny ; by following the counsels by which he sought to lead us to Christ and God and heaven ; by fulfilling the desires which he cherished on our behalf, that we might " be found in peace, without spot and blameless ;" and by dedicating ourselves to the interests of humanity, which it was his continual endeavor to advance. His death utters no word to our hearts discordant with the persuasion of his life. They both repeat the same great truths and inculcate the same paramount duties. He " lived not to himself," he must not have " died to himself." Oh ! how bitter will be reflection, how just condemnation, if after having enjoyed his life and been moved by his death, it shall hereafter appear that we have forgotten his lessons and dishonored his memory. But if we be faithful to his influence enshrined now in the hallowed place of memory, (more faithful than we were when it addressed our senses,) oh ! how sweet, how holy, how blessed the thought, that the same scenes of immortality which have hidden him from our sight shall presently receive us ; that, as of the Master, so also of him we may say, that where he is, there shall we be also. Amen !



NOTE.

The letters which passed between Dr. Channing and the Society, when he signified his wish "that all his public functions should cease," but without a dissolution of his pastoral relation, were at the time printed "for the use of the Proprietors." As they were the last official communications which passed between him and them, and as they express the feelings which reciprocally existed, the propriety of reprinting them now has been suggested. They will be read with a still stronger interest than at first; and while the frankness and simplicity of his language will strike every one, his expressions of desire for our participation in a higher tone of sentiment and life cannot but sink into the hearts of those who enjoyed the privilege of "looking to him as to a Christian pastor and spiritual friend."

At the annual meeting of the Proprietors of the Meeting-house in Federal Street, in the city of Boston, on the sixth day of May, 1840, a communication was read, which had been addressed by Rev. Dr. Channing to the Standing Committee of the Proprietors. Upon hearing the letter, the Proprietors voted to refer it to a Committee, with instructions to report at a future meeting. The following gentlemen composed that committee: Messrs. John Davis, T. H. Perkins, John Welles, Henry Chapman, Jonathan Phillips, James Savage, and George Ticknor.

At an adjourned meeting, held on the 21st day of May, the Committee presented the following

REPORT.

"BOSTON, May 27, 1840.

The Committee appointed by the Proprietors of Berry Street Church, at their meeting on the sixth inst., to consider and report on a Letter, of the first inst., from Rev. William Ellery Channing, D. D., their Senior Pastor, communicated by the Standing Committee, to whom it was addressed, having attended to the duties of their appointment, and deliberately and solicitously con-

templated the interesting subject which it embraces, ask leave respectfully to offer their unanimous result, in the form of a Letter to the Rev. Dr. Channing, which they would recommend to be adopted by the Proprietors, and by the whole Society. The Reply thus recommended is, if approved and accepted, to be authenticated and transmitted in such manner as the meeting may direct.

(Signed)

JOHN DAVIS,
T. H. PERKINS,
JOHN WELLES,
HENRY CHAPMAN,
JAMES SAVAGE,
GEORGE TICKNOR,

} Committee.

Hon. Jonathan Phillips, one of the Committee, had left Boston on his way to Europe before any action of the Committee on the subject referred to them ; but his associates have entire confidence that he would, if present, entirely concur in the above Report."

The Letter, reported by the Committee, was unanimously adopted by the Proprietors, and directed to be transmitted to the Rev. Dr. Channing, as their Reply to his communication, verified by the signatures of the Chairman of the meeting, Samuel Greele, Esq., and the Clerk of the Proprietors. They also directed the Letter of Dr. Channing, the Reply of the Proprietors, and the Report of the Committee to be printed for their use, under the direction of a Committee, consisting of the members of the former Committee, the Chairman of the meeting, and the Clerk of the Proprietors.

G. S. H.

Boston, June, 1840.

LETTER

*To the Standing Committee of the Proprietors of the Church in
Federal Street.*

BOSTON, May 1, 1840.

GENTLEMEN,—This day being the beginning of our parochial year, I think it a fit season for a communication, which I have for some time intended to make. I have, as you may recollect, proposed more than once to relinquish my salary, but have as often been requested by the Society to retain it. The last request was communicated to me by the Hon. J. Davis and the Hon. J. Welles, with a kindness which I shall always remember with gratitude. I observed to them, that one reason for relinquishing the salary was, that by receiving it I should excite expectations, which I might not be able to fulfil. But I was assured, that I was to consider myself as wholly free, and to preach only when it might be convenient. I have never lost the hope of being strengthened for greater public labors ; but as yet it has not been realized. Under this experience I have gradually

reduced my salary, and have resolved definitely to relinquish it from this day. It is also my wish and purpose, that all my public functions should cease. I do not desire, however, that a formal dissolution of our connexion should take place. Having sustained the relation of pastor nearly forty years, it will be gratifying to me that it should continue, whilst circumstances remain as they are. I wish that the members of the Society may feel that they have a right to seek friendly and spiritual counsels from me, when in need of such, and that I may have a right to communicate with them, when I can hope to do them good. I beg, however, that it may be understood, that the prosperity of the Society is far dearer to me than any personal gratification of this nature; and if it should be thought best, that there should be a formal dissolution of the relation, I desire that this may immediately take place.

In thus bringing my public labors among you to an end, I cannot but acknowledge with gratitude that kind Providence, which has sustained me so many years amidst much physical infirmity, and which has made it the employment of my life to study and teach the religion of Jesus Christ. After a long experience, I feel that life could not have been devoted to a more worthy end. My time has been given chiefly to the work of acquiring juster, clearer, more quickening views of truth and duty. In this pursuit I have spent my strength, and cheerfully surrendered most of what are called the pleasures of life. That in so doing I have obeyed a divine impulse, I believe; but I may have followed it too exclusively. The inquiries and contemplations, which belong to my profession, may have encroached on its more active duties. My studies, which would have been light to a man of ordinary strength, have produced almost daily an exhaustion, which has left me little spirit for social intercourse. It might have been better for myself and for others, had I more frequently torn my mind from the subjects, which have absorbed almost my whole intellectual energy. For this error, if such it be, I ask and hope a lenient judgment, because I have not given myself to intellectual indulgence, but have carried into my seclusion a sincere, and I hope a growing interest in my fellow-creatures, and in the Christian cause. Other and more serious deficiencies I might recall. Indeed no one can feel, more than I do, the imperfections of my ministry. For these I desire forgiveness of God and man. Still I do not feel as

if I had labored in vain. My public services have been listened to with interest, and I have had proofs, for which I am most grateful, that deeper effects than transient interest have been produced by my ministry. Not that I have accomplished what I wished. As a people, I fear, we are greatly wanting in that spiritual elevation, that superiority to the world, that love of God, of Jesus Christ, and of mankind, which is the end of religious institutions. In truth, all our churches need a new life, a new comprehension of the spirit and high purpose of Christianity. This I say for the truth's sake, and in sorrow of heart, and not from any wounded feelings under the consciousness of having exerted no greater influence. As far as I am personally concerned, I have nothing to complain of, no reproaches to utter. I have received for many years expressions of kindness, for which I offer my sincere thanks. It is indeed a gratifying consideration, that our long union has not been disturbed even by a word of contention. I am not aware that a thought or emotion of unkindness has risen within me towards one of my parishioners. Were I now to leave them, I could from the heart bid an affectionate farewell to *all*.

I have spoken of the past. It is natural for me at such a moment to cast a look towards the future. It is possible, that some sphere of action, not now anticipated, may open on me. It is more probable, that my present sphere will be contracted. When I look round me, I see not one of the ministers, who filled the pulpits of this city at my ordination. All have gone to their account; and not a few, settled since, have also passed away. He, who seemed destined to go among the first, survives alone. Can I help applying to myself the language of the apostle, "The time of my departure is at hand"? Nor is the time very distant, when all, to whom I have ministered, will have entered the unknown world. It is my fervent prayer, that we may meet in the temple "not made with hands," and that a holier worship than has united us here may bind us together forever.

I may on another occasion express my feelings more fully to the Society. I earnestly desire, that they may continue to enjoy the labors of their devoted pastor, and that through this and other means of religion their harmony may be perpetuated, and their spiritual improvement never cease.

With respect and affection, your friend,

WM. E. CHANNING.

R E P L Y .

The Proprietors and Congregation of the Church in Berry Street to their Senior Pastor, the Reverend William Ellery Channing, D. D.

REV. AND DEAR SIR, — We have received from the Standing Committee of the Proprietors the letter you addressed them on the first instant, announcing your purpose, from that day, to relinquish the small remainder of salary, which, at our earnest request, you had till then consented to receive from us ; and expressing your desire that, without formally dissolving the connexion that has so long and so happily subsisted between us, your public functions as a minister of Christ to this Society may cease.

We do not wish to conceal from you, that we receive this decision with regret and pain. Perhaps we feel it the more sensibly, because it seems to be our duty to acquiesce in it, and thus make it final. For several years we have known that you considered such a separation, as you now propose, desirable on account of the state of your health, and if we have heretofore been unwilling to give it our concurrence, it has been from feelings of respect and attachment to yourself, that have grown old in many of our hearts, and sunk deep in all of them. We may, from these feelings, have resisted your wishes longer than we ought to have done, but we hope and trust we have not been unreasonable ; and now that the time has arrived, when we are not permitted to hesitate in giving to them our full assent, it gratifies us, that you do not seek to make the separation absolute and entire, but that you are desirous on your part, as we are on ours, to retain some of the bonds that have united us during a connexion, that has been permitted to be so happy and to last so long.

You allude to the possibility, that some inconvenience may hereafter arise to us from the continuance of these bonds. We anticipate none. We can imagine nothing but good from their continuance. Still if, in the course of Providence, any inconvenience should be felt, we shall, in the spirit of frankness with which you have spoken of our union and its motives, avail ourselves of your permission to dissolve it, trusting, that with the same frankness you would claim the right you grant ; and if it should at any time seem important or desirable to you to exercise it, that you would do so, and separate yourself from us wholly. We do not, however, suppose it at all

likely that either party will take a step, which we are sure neither would take but with great reluctance and from a strong sense of duty; and we allude to its possibility, only because you have done so, and because we think it important that both should feel perfectly free to act in circumstances that cannot be foreseen.

Our connexion, as you intimate, has been continued through a longer period than could at first have been anticipated, — a period indeed so long, that few remain among us, who bore witness to its beginning. You came to us thirty-seven years ago, when our numbers were so few and our circumstances so humble, that it was apparent you came only from a sense of duty, and from a disinterested desire to serve your fellow-men. Under your care, however, we soon prospered and grew numerous. But at every step of our progress we felt that, under God's good Providence, we owed it chiefly to you. We have, too, as we trust, been thankful for the ministrations we have enjoyed. We have certainly felt them to be a privilege — a great privilege — and we have greatly valued them. Nor has their influence been confined to ourselves. They have been felt and acknowledged beyond the limits of our own Society, beyond the limits of our own country; and we trust that even yet neither their work nor yours is wholly accomplished. We trust, that long after both you and we are gone to render up our last account, your spirit, in the record of what you have here spoken, will be still active in the great cause of Christ and of human improvement, to which you have devoted your life. The only regret we feel, when looking back upon the period of your connexion with us, is, that we have not profited, as we ought to have done, by the privileges we have enjoyed; that we have not become spiritual, and superior to the world; devoted to duty, as you have labored to make us. We pray God to forgive us for our deficiencies, and to make your teachings more effectual to the generations that are to come after us, than they have been to us and to our own.

We feel gratified by the suggestion, that your public labors may not wholly cease; and that you may not only speak again to us, but that it is possible you may become active in some other sphere of usefulness. Amidst whatever circumstances the course of God's Providence may place you, we doubt not that your influence will be elevating and improving; and that we shall always witness and share its effects with thankfulness, seeking such personal and more imme-

diate intercourse with you, as our relative positions may permit and authorize, and looking to you, at all times, as to a Christian Pastor and spiritual friend.

It is, we know, a satisfaction to you, as it is to us, that you do not leave us alone, but that we remain under the ministrations of the able and devoted Pastor, who has been so long associated with you. We pray, for your sake, as well as for our own, that his health may be fully restored; and that his services, such as you have yourself been accustomed to witness and share them, may be yet many years continued to us and to our children. We can desire nothing better than such fidelity and devotedness as his, except a corresponding faithfulness on our own part to improve by them.

In conclusion, we would invoke on you the blessings you have so often besought for us, adding, for the sake of the cause of Christianity and human improvement, our prayers that your strength and health may be increased, and that your faculties may be preserved unimpaired to a remote and happy old age.

On behalf of the Proprietors and the Congregation of Berry Street Church.

SAMUEL GREELE, *Chairman.*

GEORGE S. HILLARD, *Proprietors' Clerk.*

In connection with these letters the proceedings in relation to Dr. Channing's settlement will be read with special interest. They are therefore copied from the records of the Society. To almost every one of the present members they will be new; but four of those who voted on the occasion of the "call" are now living. The smallness of the congregation at that time may be inferred from the fact, that only twenty-eight persons — male members — were present at the meeting which extended the invitation to Mr. Channing. From the records he appears to have preached but a few times before receiving their invitation. On the 5th of September, 1802, Rev. John S. Popkin requested the Society to grant him "a relaxation from public duty for a few weeks," that he might be "enabled better to determine under Providence whether his health would be reestablished." This request was granted. But on the 14th of November he addressed

to them another letter, in which he stated that, though his "health had been considerably improved," he was "not confident that it would be preserved in the town," and "under existing circumstances had concluded to request a regular dismissal from the ministerial relation;" which was granted by vote of the Society November 21. Mr. Channing preached on the 31st of October, on the 7th of November, when "Dr. Eliot administered the communion," on the 14th and 21st of November, and on the 25th, which was "Thanksgiving day." On the 9th of December a Committee was chosen "to supply the pulpit with candidates on probation."

The members of the Society will remark the same interest in their welfare, in the first and the last communications addressed to them by their late Pastor. May their fidelity to his instructions prove that his labors among them "have not been in vain in the Lord."

A meeting of the brethren of this Society (duly warned) was held in the School-house December 28th, 1802, at six o'clock P. M. The question of resetting a Minister being fully discussed,

Voted, That a call be presented Mr. William Ellery Channing to settle with us as our minister, and that a Committee of seven be chosen to carry the proceedings of this evening into effect, viz. Francis Wright, Henry Hunter, Thomas Davis, John Davis, Simon Elliot, Russell Sturgis, and Edward Tuckerman, Jr.

2d. That as a compensation to Mr. William Ellery Channing, in case he should accept the invitation of the Society, they agree to pay him twenty-five dollars per week, and to furnish him with his necessary fuel so long as his Pastoral relation to them shall continue, and in case of an increase of his necessary expenses or of his duties by an augmentation of the Society, the Society pledge themselves to make him such additional compensation as shall be just and reasonable.

Dissolved.

CALL.

Boston, December 29, 1802.

DEAR SIR, — When a Committee of the religious Society in Federal street lately made application to you to preach on probation, they were influenced not merely by their own united opinions, but by their persuasion of the dispositions and wishes of the Society which they represented.

It is gratifying to find, that in this persuasion they were not mistaken, but that the Society have received such satisfaction from your ministrations among them, and have such a conviction of your character and accomplishments, that they were prepared for a more decisive expression of their approbation. At a full meeting of the Society, holden on the 28th inst., they voted to invite you to become their Pastor, and have assigned to us the grateful office of presenting to you their invitation.

Their votes which we enclose will inform you of the provision which they offer for your support.

In determining on the compensation which it would be proper for them to propose, the Society have been governed by serious, and, they hope, liberal views of the charge which they request you to undertake. They are sensible what profound reflection and laborious inquiry the sacred office requires, and it is their wish and intention, that the mind devoted to such high engagements should, as far as may be practicable, be undisturbed by solitudes and embarrassment from the cares of life.

In this interesting transaction there has been great unanimity. Four only of the whole Society expressed any indecision on the subject. Two of those, from absence, had not had equal opportunity with the rest of the Society to form a satisfactory judgment. All the four so far concurred in the favorable sentiments entertained by the Society in general, that they wished to hear you further; with a laudable deference to the general sentiment they excused themselves from giving a voice on the question, and signified their disposition to acquiesce in the decision of their brethren.

We have thus the satisfaction to present you the desires of an united people, and cannot but express a hope that this invitation and the proposals accompanying it will be acceptable to you. Such a result we shall consider as a blessing of Heaven on the Society and its members, and all with whom they are tenderly connected.

Any explanations or further communications from us, which may be considered necessary, we shall cheerfully offer on request; for this purpose a personal interview would be agreeable to us, but the distance and the season of the year would render it inconvenient for the committee to repair to Newport. If it should be convenient to you, before your proposed return to this vicinity, to be at Providence

or Bristol, some of the Committee would have the pleasure of meeting you at either of those places at such time as you shall specify.

In the name and behalf of the Society we remain,

Respectfully, with great regard,

Your friends and obedient servants,

FRANCIS WRIGHT,	}	<i>Committee.</i>
HENRY HUNTER,		
THOMAS DAVIS,		
JOHN DAVIS,		
SIMON ELLIOT,		
RUSSELL STURGIS,		
EDWARD TUCKERMAN, Jr.,	}	

MR. WILLIAM E. CHANNING.

BOSTON, December 30, 1802.

DEAR SIR, — Since the letter which accompanies this was prepared, one of our number, Deacon Francis Wright, has concluded to present our invitation to you. This may render unnecessary the interview proposed at the close of our letter, and we request you to consider any communications which may be made to you by Deacon Wright on the subject to which that letter relates as authorized by us.

With respect, your friends and obedient servants,

HENRY HUNTER,
JNO. DAVIS,
THOMAS DAVIS,
SIMON ELLIOT,
RUSSELL STURGIS,
EDWD. TUCKERMAN, Jr.

To MR. WILLIAM E. CHANNING, }
Newport, R. Island. }

NEWPORT, Jan'y. 3, 1803.

GENTLEMEN, — By the kind attention of Deacon Wright, I have received your letter and the votes of the Society which accompanied it, inviting me to become their pastor. It is highly gratifying to me to learn that my ministrations have been acceptable, and I shall ever remember with gratitude the affectionate and encouraging style in which you have addressed me. I shall give your proposals the seri-

ous attention which they require ; but as a decision on my part will have an influence on my whole life and may involve important consequences, it is necessary to deliberate with care and to avail myself of the experience and advice of my friends. Your letter and the communications of Deacon Wright have placed me in full possession of those circumstances which are required to form a decision. In consequence of another application this decision may be delayed, but you may depend upon hearing from me as soon as I can give an answer. I pray God that in my deliberations I may be influenced by the purest motives, and be directed to that determination which will render me most useful to his Church.

With the highest respect for the Society which you represent,

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your friend and obed't. servant,

WILL'M. E. CHANNING.

To the Committee of the }
Religious Society in Federal Street. }

February 5, 1803, 12 o'clock at noon. Mr. Channing met the Committee at the house of Mr. Thomas Davis, and informed them that he was fully satisfied with the proposals of the Society, and accepted their invitation to settle with them as their minister, and declined preaching for two months, at the expiration of which time he expected he should be ready to discharge the ministerial duties.

To the Committee of the Religious Society in Federal Street.

GENTLEMEN, — I now address you to communicate my acceptance of the invitation of the Society in Federal Street to settle with them as their minister. The character of the Society, the favorable disposition they have expressed towards me, and the prospect of usefulness in a situation so well adapted to my present state of health, render this call peculiarly agreeable.

The proposals you have communicated are entirely satisfactory ; and when I consider them as expressive of regard to religion, and originating in a desire to relieve your minister from solitudes and embarrassments, I accede to them with pleasure. A house was not mentioned, but I view the clause which provided for "additional